

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS LJUBLJANA 000433

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE, EUR/ERA, EB
USDOC FOR 4232/MAC/EUR/EERIS/CEEBC/BURGESS/ROGERS
VIENNA FOR AG COUNSELOR

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PINR](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: COM CALLS ON NEW MINISTER OF
AGRICULTURE

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect
accordingly.

1. (U) SUMMARY. In a 04 May meeting, new Minister of Agriculture, Milan Pogacnik, told COM that Slovenia is "prepared" to adopt EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) guidelines, though not without some adjustment pains. Pogacnik also expressed a strong desire to work with the Mission in matters of mutual interest such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and in advancing the Doha Development Agenda. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) On 04 May, COM, accompanied by DCM, Econoff, and Econ Specialist, called on new AgMin Milan Pogacnik to congratulate him on his recent appointment as minister, and to seek his insights on the impact EU membership will have on Slovenia's agricultural sector. Dusan Vujadinovic, State Undersecretary for Agriculture and Marina Rojko, Public Relations, also participated in the meeting.

The "Technical Minister"

3. (U) Appearing relaxed and confident, Pogacnik described himself as the "technical minister." "I am a technical minister, not a politician. This is a new experience for me." [NOTE: Pogacnik has taught at the National Veterinary Institute for over thirty years. END NOTE]. He expects to apply the management skills gained running the Institute in his new capacity as minister. "I have experience running institutions, and here in the Ministry, I have the support of very knowledgeable and qualified colleagues," commented Pogacnik. [NOTE: Pogacnik is a professor of Pathological Morphology, Forensic Veterinary Medicine at the National Veterinary Institute, serving as Dean since 1990. He spent time in the U.S., conducting research in agro-forestry development. As he told COM, "my experience in the U.S. introduced me to the concept of sustainable development." END NOTE].

Common Agricultural Policy/EU

4. (U) When COM asked Pogacnik about Slovenia's preparations to adopt the EU's CAP guidelines, he indicated that his predecessor had worked diligently and had prepared the framework for Slovenia's entry. "Minister France But did excellent work at the Ministry, and in meetings with EU officials," Pogacnik observed. The AgMin noted that dairy producers and small farmers would be most affected by CAP regulations. Despite the possible displacement of some farmers, Pogacnik was hopeful that Slovenia's focus on environmental protection and rural development will preserve traditional farming. Responding to COM's question regarding the loss of preferential trade tariffs with southeastern European countries, Pogacnik reported that the "change would be negligible." [NOTE: Slovenian farmers are expected to receive Euro 75 million in 2004; Euro 84 million in 2005; Euro 89 million in 2006. Slovenia will implement CAP by 2007. END NOTE].

5. (U) Pogacnik told COM that Slovenia will remain engaged in finding ways to foment free trade in agriculture in line with Doha Development Agenda principles. He did not offer, however, any specifics on areas where Slovenia may encourage the EU to promote agricultural reforms based on the DDA.

GMO

6. (U) COM informed Pogacnik of the U.S.'s interest in

making sure that the EU suspends its self-imposed GMO moratorium, and of the costs associated with traceability and labeling requirements. Pogacnik told COM that "Slovenia is relatively conservative when it comes to GMOs." Slovenian farmers have opted for an "organic agricultural production" approach hoping to fill a niche. Pogacnik added that much remains to educate consumers about GMOs, but offered no comment

regarding Slovenia's stance on the EU's GMO moratorium, or costs associated with traceability and labeling requirements.

BSE

17. (U) Pogacnik indicated that Slovenia follows "strict controls" when dealing with possible cases of BSE. He reported that over 65,000 head of cattle are tested annually, and that new legislation is in line with EU directives. The new legislation bans certain ingredients (i.e. -- cattle brains) from feed products. Pogacnik seemed to be content with the mechanism in place to prevent and control possible BSE outbreaks.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Pogacnik's ability to leave a mark in the Ministry will be limited. The self-described "technical minister" understands that he is a caretaker until a new government is formed at the end of this year. However, he did not rule out the possibility of staying on as AgMin if offered the position -- "never say never," he quipped when COM asked him about his future. Pogacnik struck us as an open and frank interlocutor, genuinely interested in developing closer ties with the U.S. whether through educational exchanges or through other means. END COMMENT.

YOUNG

NNNN